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AUTHOR Dynneson, Thomas L.
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ABSTRACT

Pre-collegiate anthropology is traced from the 1940's, when it was nothing more than an incidental footnote in most social studies textbooks, to 1978, when, according to a survey of state social studies specialists, it was part of the social studies curriculum in most states. Reasons for the development of pre-collegiate anthropology during the time period in question are (1) more teachers received training in anthropology as universities added or expanded anthropology departments, (2) more instructional materials were developed (although there is still a serious dearth of pre-collegiate anthropology materials), (3) professional anthropology associations became more supportive of pre-collegiate educational efforts, (4) the American public became increasingly interested in the work of prominent anthropologists as a result of mass media coverage, and (5) increased federal and private financial support became available for developing new curricula. The conclusion is that pre-collegiate anthropology was being taught in some form and at some grade level in about half the states by 1978. Implications for the future of pre-collegiate anthropology are, however unclear. For example, if one of the most serious problems--the lack of instructional materials--is not solved, pre-collegiate anthropology may revert to its former status as an unrecognized or hidden component of the social studies curriculum. (Author/DB)

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Pre-collegiate Anthropology: Progress or Peril?

by

Thomas L. Dynneson

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The University of Texas of the Permian Basin

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Introduction

Evidence from a survey of state social studies specialists indicates that pre-collegiate anthropology has become part of the social studies curriculum in most states. Before the 1960s, pre-collegiate anthropology was an unrecognized or hidden component of the social studies curriculum for both elementary and secondary schools. The "new social studies" movement of the 1960s and 1970s was mainly responsible for the new and evolving status of this content area. Recent conditions, however, indicate that there is a diminishing interest at both the professional and educational levels. If this trend continues, it may signify that pre-collegiate anthropology is destined to return to its former status as an unrecognized or hidden component of the social studies curriculum.

The Emergence of Pre-collegiate Anthropology

Prior to World War II, pre-collegiate anthropology was nothing more than an incidental footnote in most social studies textbooks. From time to time geography or world history texts included some aspect of anthropology content when it related to a place or event. This situation was somewhat modified by the events that occurred during the war. American soldiers visited places and peoples all over the world. As a result of media coverage, the American public became curious and interested in foreign lands and "exotic" cultures. Social studies teachers became aware of their need to inform students about places and cultures that had been excluded from their classroom

textbooks. It was also during this period that colleges and universities added or expanded anthropology departments on their campuses. With the establishment of anthropology programs, social studies teachers began to receive formal training in the academic study of anthropology. Some of these social studies teachers would organize units of study or elective courses for students attending the public schools. By the middle of the twentieth century experimental courses in pre-collegiate anthropology were being reported in various educational journals.

Experimental courses for the pre-collegiate level of instruction were difficult to organize. This was due mainly to the lack of teaching materials designed for elementary or secondary schools. In addition to this complication, there were no guidelines to help teachers design units or courses of instruction in anthropology. Each teacher had to improvise a course based upon his own experiences.

Instructional materials were, and still are, the single most serious barrier to teaching anthropology in the elementary and secondary schools. There were no textbooks written for pre-collegiate students, and teaching resources were very scarce. Planning a course for the first time requires that the teacher put in endless hours locating suitable printed and audio-visual materials. While college textbooks were available to the teacher as a reference source, these textbooks were not appropriate for student use. There were no professional organizations to lend supportive services to

teachers in this predicament. In spite of these problems, some successful courses were organized and taught by determined teachers. Magazines such as The National Geographic were one of the few popular resources that were appropriate for pre-collegiate use. Museums were helpful as a source of information on specific topics, such as "North American Indians." During the 1940's and 1950's commercial textbook companies apparently were not willing to invest in the development of pre-collegiate anthropology materials. This was a justifiable position because the potential market for pre-collegiate anthropology materials was extremely limited.

Television also has contributed to the development of pre-collegiate anthropology. Through the media of television, the American public has learned about the work of anthropologists. Television has helped to make the work of prominent anthropologists popular with the American public. Through this type of exposure, almost everyone has learned something about the work of anthropologists which has tended to make the subject more acceptable as a public school topic. In addition, television has provided resources for the public school classroom. In time, universities and colleges may develop courses in anthropology that can be directly transmitted into the public school classroom. This would not only promote anthropology as a pre-collegiate discipline, but it also would give professional anthropologists a broader audience than they presently enjoy.

Pre-collegiate Anthropology and "The New Social Studies"

The years spanning the period from 1955 to 1972 have been referred to as the era of "the new social studies." During this period, financial support from both federal and private sources became available to authors for the purpose of developing new curriculum programs for the elementary and secondary schools. These new programs were highly experimental and it was believed that some of them would become part of the social studies curriculum. Many of these projects developed materials for the teaching of the social sciences. This was a departure from the more traditional programs for the social studies area. In the past, the social studies curriculum contained elements of social science content, but these concepts were simplified and not always characteristic of the disciplines. Curriculum design and objectives were expected to relate to the growth and development of the student. In addition, the social studies curriculum had been concerned with the development of "good citizens" of a democratic society.

Since the social studies curriculum has not contained separate social science disciplines, the "new social studies" writers somewhat modified traditional patterns within the social studies curriculum. Many of the new and experimental social science curriculums attempted to develop programs similar to the social science programs taught at the college and university levels. This approach was exemplified in at least some anthropology curriculum projects including the Anthropology Curriculum Project and the Anthropology Curriculum Study Project.

In 1972 this author reviewed a large number of "new social studies" projects in an effort to identify which ones were primarily anthropological instructional programs. While many of the new social studies programs contained aspects of anthropological content, few were specifically designed to teach anthropology as a discrete discipline. As a result of this review, seven projects were found to contain great quantities of anthropological content. Three of these projects were exclusively anthropological (Dynneson 1972). They were the Anthropology Curriculum Project (ACP), The Anthropology Curriculum Study Project (ACSP), and Man: A Course of Study (MACOS).

The Anthropology Curriculum Project was developed at the University of Georgia under the direction of Marion J. Rice. This project attempted to develop instructional materials for the elementary and junior high schools. Those working with this project produced grade level booklets that were experimentally taught in the schools. While this project continues to exist at the University of Georgia, the materials have never become commercially available to teachers.

The Anthropology Curriculum Study Project was located at the University of Chicago under the direction of Malcolm Collier. During the years of its existence, it produced a one semester secondary course that became available to teachers through the Macmillan Company. This project was under the title Patterns of Human History sponsored by the American Anthropological Association with the support of the National Science Foundation.

Man: A Course of Study was designed as a one year fifth grade course. This was produced under the direction of Peter Dow at the Educational Development Center in Cambridge, Mass. The instructional materials for this course included a variety of printed materials and ethnographic films. An unusual aspect of this project was the establishment of regional centers that trained teachers for using this material in their respective school districts. This project experienced a great deal of initial success, but it became one of the most controversial programs to be developed during the "new social studies." MACOS was criticized by groups of parents and disgruntled citizens who believed that it taught concepts that were not in step with traditional American values and the films also were considered too explicit for elementary children. (Dow 1976)

Because of the experiences with Man: A Course of Study, anthropologists and educators began to question whether or not anthropological content might not be too sensitive and controversial for the pre-collegiate classroom. This issue was investigated in a 1978 survey of state social studies specialists. (Kenney 1978) The results of this survey tend to support the notion that educators do not view anthropology content as too controversial for the pre-collegiate curriculum. This seems to contradict the experiences that involved Man: A Course of Study. The contradiction may be explained by the fact that the other anthropology projects did not trigger controversy. Man: A Course of Study evidently represents a

situation in which its content was perceived as offensive to certain groups, while anthropology content per se was not. It seems that Man: A Course of Study was never directly associated with the teaching of anthropology, therefore, the issue of whether or not to teach anthropology in the public schools did not become an issue.

Research in Pre-collegiate Anthropology

In order to determine the extent to which anthropology was being taught in the elementary and secondary schools, surveys were mailed to state social studies specialists in 1972 and again in 1978. These surveys were intended to ascertain information about the status of pre-collegiate anthropology in the social studies curriculum. The questionnaires contained items that related to the number of school districts involved in the teaching of anthropology, the nature of the programs being offered to students, the instructional materials used in the classroom, and the attitude of educators toward the teaching of anthropology.

The 1972 questionnaire was sent out by this author as part of his dissertational research. (Dynnesson 1972) Each person designated as a state social studies specialist was sent a copy of the questionnaire. The results from this survey were somewhat disappointing in that only twenty responses were returned. While this response did not provide an accurate picture of the status of pre-collegiate anthropology in the United States, it did provide some insights into the states

that did participate in the study. From these responses it was concluded that pre-collegiate anthropology was seldom taught within the states from which responses were received. California was the single most notable exception to this conclusion. Fifty-five independent school districts in California offered programs at either the elementary or secondary level of instruction. The other responses from state specialists reported only one or two school districts with programs in anthropology. Most of these specialists reported programs that made use of project materials that had been developed during the era of "the new social studies."

In 1977 Professor Marion J. Rice had a questionnaire printed in the October 1977 issue of Social Education. He had intended to use this questionnaire as a means of identifying teachers throughout the United States who were currently teaching programs in anthropology. This journal has a circulation of over twenty thousand and is the professional journal for social studies teachers. Unfortunately, only fifty of the responses that Professor Rice received were usable. While Rice was unsuccessful in identifying large numbers of teachers of anthropology, his efforts were laudable.

In 1978 Margaret Jones Kennedy attempted to determine the status of pre-collegiate anthropology by duplicating the 1972 Dynneson survey in an expanded form. (Kennedy 1978) Kennedy was able to receive responses from all fifty of the state specialists. The information received as a result of this survey was more comprehensive than any other inquiry.

Upon completion of the analysis of her survey results, Mrs. Kennedy was able to present a comprehensive report on the status of pre-collegiate anthropology. A summary of the more general conclusions of this study follows:

- Anthropology has moved from an unrecognized or hidden aspect of the social studies curriculum to a recognized instructional component or discipline. This transition had taken place in about a ten year period.

- The curriculum materials that were produced during "the new social studies" era played a major role in the changing status of anthropology.

- Educators tended to see anthropology education as an interdisciplinary ingredient of the social studies rather than as a separate discipline. While it may have been taught as an elective course in the secondary schools, its perceived importance was as a supportive element in the study of human behavior.

- Most of the social studies specialists reported that anthropology courses would not be required by either state or local officials.

- Anthropology programs were most common in urban rather than in rural areas.

- Anthropology content did not seem to be considered controversial among social studies educators. There seemed to be more overall support for the teaching of anthropology at the time of the survey than there had been in the past.

- The teaching of anthropology seemed to depend on the availability of instructional materials. Anthropology instruction tended to be based on materials developed during "the new social studies" era and other standard commercial curriculum materials.

The information gathered in the 1978 survey indicated that anthropology was being taught in some form and at some grade level in about half of the states. This is considered an important change when compared to the very few states reporting instruction in anthropology in 1972. The growth in pre-collegiate anthropology instruction seems to be due to the availability of instructional materials from projects or publishers. While these results seem to indicate an increase in the teaching of anthropology in the elementary and secondary schools, the fact that almost all of the anthropology projects have ceased to exist may foretell a sharp decline in the future teaching of anthropology. There are other serious problems that will continue to limit the future development of pre-collegiate anthropology. In addition to a general lack of instructional materials, there is little teacher preparation in anthropology. Most state and local school officials are not interested in the teaching of anthropology. The orientation of the social studies curriculum also seems to be moving away from a social science emphasis.

Conclusion

History, civics, and geography traditionally have dominated the social studies curriculum. In the era known as "the new

social studies," the social science disciplines received the attention of authors and project directors. As a result of their efforts, the social sciences, including anthropology, were incorporated into the social studies curriculum. Prior to this time pre-collegiate anthropology had been an unrecognized or hidden component of the social studies. These new curricular materials had the effect of changing the status of anthropology to a recognized subject field that could be taught as an interdisciplinary or discrete course at both the elementary or secondary levels. Instruction in anthropology has grown rapidly from 1972 to 1978. Since 1972, however, most of the curriculum projects that produced instructional materials in anthropology have gone out of existence.

According to the surveys that were completed in the 1970s, pre-collegiate anthropology has been included as part of the social studies curriculum in almost half of the states. Curriculum specialists for each state seem to consider anthropology an acceptable area of instruction for the public schools. In spite of these findings, there are several serious educational problems that are potentially damaging to the future development of pre-collegiate anthropology. The most serious of these problems is the availability of instructional materials. Because of this problem alone, pre-collegiate anthropology may revert to its former status as an unrecognized or hidden component of the social studies curriculum by the end of the 1980s.

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